



**Personal Guideline for Course Development:**  
**Summary of Lessons Learned at Ohio State's School**  
**of Educational Policy and Leadership**

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## Introduction

The purpose of this paper is to outline my graduate school experience and reflect on what I have learned from the Master's program in General Professional Studies at the Ohio State University. Unlike other students in the program, I will not have the opportunity to use my recently acquired skills immediately after graduation. The Air Force Academy sponsored this graduate program so I could gain the knowledge and experience to provide leadership and guidance in their Honor and Ethics Education Program. However, due to other Air Force commitments, I will not be able to apply this knowledge for at least six to seven years. Therefore, I plan to document what I have learned during my three quarters at Ohio State and determine what major lessons I must remember to be effective in curriculum development and management.

Before I begin, I must remind myself that various courses emphasized the importance of professional development for educators. It is my opinion that this is a continuous process that does not end with the mere attainment of a Master's or any other advanced degree. Therefore, I must emphasize that the following reflections are nothing more than a foundation for effective course development. It is my responsibility to stay up to date with new developments in the field of education and avoid becoming complacent about both my knowledge and my abilities as an educator. Like anything else in life, the only certainty in education is continual change and I must be prepared to adapt to new situations, evolving courses, and the passage of time.

This paper will be organized in the following manner. The first part will be a detailed description of the fourteen courses I took at Ohio State. It will provide each course's objective(s) listed in either the syllabus and/or the Course Offerings Bulletin for 1997-1998

followed by a reflection of what I learned in regards to curriculum development and management and other issues related to education. The second part of the paper will summarize the most important themes and lessons I should take from this graduate school experience. The next section will list some considerations that are unique to the Air Force Academy. Fortunately, I am only one year removed from being a student at the Academy and remember aspects of the institution that will influence both the effectiveness and relevance of the various lessons I have learned in the graduate program. Once again, the paper will fulfill its role to remind me of things that I might otherwise forget. Finally, the paper will conclude with a short summary of what I have gained from my time at Ohio State.

## Course Descriptions

In this section, I will list the courses with the quarter I took them. As stated before, the official course objective will be listed followed by my personal reflections about what I obtained from the class. Here are some acronyms that will be used:

**ED P&L-** Educational Policy and Leadership

**ED T&L-** Educational Teaching and Learning

**PUBPOL&MGT-** Public Policy and Management

**AU-** Autumn Quarter

**SP-** Spring Quarter

**WI-** Winter Quarter

### **ED P&L 650G03: Applied Ethics for Teachers (AU 1997)**

*Objective: An examination of selected moral/ethical issues which face practicing educators with an emphasis on developing ethical decision making skills.*

The reason I signed up for this course was to get another profession's view on ethics. In four years at the Air Force Academy, I understood the military's view of morality as well as their approach to instilling this trait within their students. I hoped that Professor Reagan's class could provide insight into other ways of teaching ethical behavior in the workplace.

The first thing I learned in this course and many others is the importance of student engagement. First of all, the professor provided examples of ethical dilemmas that teachers have faced in the past. Since many students could relate to these scenarios, the topic of ethics in education became very relevant and "real" to them. Furthermore, Professor Reagan acknowledged that these types of situations are often very complex because competing standards such as religion, statutes, personal views, politics, etc. weigh heavily upon an

individual's decision. Therefore, this course provided the opportunity for students to practice their ability to deal with awkward situations while defining their own values and priorities. The theory behind this approach is that practicing with class exercises and case studies will build confidence within the students to effectively handle moral/ethical situations in the future.

This course introduced the "moral negotiation" process that can theoretically resolve ethical conflicts in a rational manner. This approach suggests that people should avoid arguing over opinions and values, but concentrate on the facts of an ethical situation. Hopefully, both sides can gain an understanding of the other's point of view and find a resolution acceptable to both sides. This method is very ideal in nature yet provides a useful way for students to look at all sides of an issue instead of only their assumptions, stereotypes and experiences.

This approach to developing ethical decision making skills can be incorporated into the Air Force Academy's Honor and Ethics Education Program. The cadets can be presented with situations that military officers face in the operational Air Force and practice resolving them. Currently the curriculum focuses on issues like cheating, lying, stealing, and tolerating this type of behavior while at the Air Force Academy rather than expanding these ideals into situations in the Air Force at large. Only a few exercises are available where cadets are expected to resolve ethical dilemmas but it seems as if the scenarios are outdated and duplicated year after year. This points out the importance of continually evaluating the curriculum and ensuring that it is up to date and still relevant to the students. My reflections on other courses will also discuss this important aspect of course development and management.

In summary, the most important things I should remember from ED P&L 650G03 are the importance of student engagement, Professor Reagan's approach to developing ethical decision making skills within a student, and the idea of "moral negotiation" as a model to resolve moral disagreements.

**ED P&L 851: College Teaching (AU 1997)**

*Objective: Designed as initial preparation for instruction at the college level; focuses on the generic skills, strategies, and issues common to university teaching. Specifically, this course concentrates on pedagogical approaches, the nature of college-aged learners, cognition, motivation, and assessment techniques appropriate for college teaching.*

When I started this Master's program, I had very little experience in teaching college students. This course provided students with the skills necessary to be an effective college instructor. First of all, the professor introduced the numerous teaching techniques that are available with their associated advantages and disadvantages. For instance, a course can be taught through lectures, seminars, small discussion groups, case studies, role playing, one-on-one interaction, and so on. Each approach can be useful and effective depending on the subject matter, student's personality and learning style, instructor's ability, and other variables. It is up to each teacher to discover the technique that will work the best in his/her classroom.

The course also discussed the importance of professional development. Each student was asked to prepare a portfolio to describe his/her teaching philosophy and experience. Two lessons were set aside so students could teach a short lesson in their respective fields, and be evaluated by the other members of the class. Professor Hoy explained that teachers should never grow complacent about their abilities. Instead, instructors should participate in workshops and ask for feedback from peers and students to improve their teaching

technique, course content, and other aspects of their classroom. Furthermore, teachers should communicate with one another and share information about methods that work in different classes to improve the overall quality of education. This is the essence of professional development in the field of education.

Finally, Professor Hoy presented the psychological aspects of teaching like the existence of numerous learning styles. She provided various instruments to measure student tendencies, strengths/ weaknesses, and other characteristics that could help the teacher adjust his/her teaching to meet the students' needs. Once again, this stressed the importance of continual evaluation of a course and teaching techniques to ensure that everything is being done to help the students learn the material. When an approach works in one classroom, it does not guarantee that the same approach will always work. A teacher must keep in mind that different students have different learning styles, and he/she must be prepared to adapt year after year and be open to use different tools and teaching approaches.

ED P&L 851 concentrated on helping college professors but the objectives are important to curriculum developers as well. First of all, the curriculum should be flexible enough so different teaching techniques and styles could be used to accommodate different learning styles. Similarly, the lessons should not be viewed as being written in stone. The best approach is to request feedback from the instructors and students to see if they have any suggestions to make the course more effective and engaging. Finally, schools can provide time for teachers to meet, discuss and share ideas about teaching the lessons. At the Air Force Academy, the cadet honor representatives meet twice a month to collaborate with their peers and hopefully improve the overall quality of the lessons. In summary, the best



policy is to be flexible and open to change and never grow complacent with a curriculum.

There is always room for improvement.

### **ED P&L 823: The Functions of the Computer in the Classroom (AU 1997)**

*Objective: A critical examination of the issues raised by the implementation and use of microcomputers in schools. It examines the practices and issues that have emerged as the use of computers in society at large has become common and the number of computers in schools and their power have increased.*

At the Air Force Academy, every student has a computer in his/her room. Most colleges and universities have numerous computer labs and some schools even require students to have a personal computer upon admission. All of this suggests that computers are becoming a vital part of education and this dependency will only grow in the years to come. The tendency is to buy into this trend without critically examining the possible consequences. This course examined the various issues that should be raised whenever someone is considering using computers in the classroom.

First of all, most people agree that computers have the potential to provide a breakthrough in education. This is especially true in the area of student engagement. A computer can allow a person to learn at his/her own pace within the confines of a dorm room, apartment, office or computer lab, and at any hour of the day. Furthermore, today's machines hold an immense amount of data, provide high quality multimedia displays (both audio and video) and allow interaction over the Internet with people all over the world. New tools and software are created that take advantage of these capabilities, and many universities are jumping on board to create online courses.

However, some time should be spent to examine if this movement is in the best interest of education and society. This course discussed various aspects of this computer

revolution that are not beneficial. For example, many socio-economic groups do not have access to these machines and feel as if they are being left behind. The only schools that can afford current versions of computers and the technical support to ensure they are working are located in more affluent areas. Is this fair to other schools and communities that do not have sufficient funds to follow suit? Another criticism is that the emphasis on computers will sacrifice a very important part of education: human interaction. This is just a small sample of issues that are being raised in response to growing reliance on computers in education.

The main point in this course is to question the use of computers in today's schools and its possible effects on society, education and the future. This does not mean that computers should not be incorporated into a curriculum. Instead, time should be spent to resolve issues like access and hegemony to ensure that society is not further polarized if computers become overemphasized in American education. For a curriculum developer, the potential for student engagement on an individual basis must be weighed against issues like hegemony and reduced human interaction.

### **ED P&L 860: Fundamentals of Curriculum (AU 1997)**

*Objective: Designed to serve as an overview of the field of curriculum and instruction. This field addresses and examines basic questions about the content of schooling: what we should teach, what has historically influenced what we teach, how should we organize it, who does and should control the curriculum, and how we should develop it.*

In most cases, administrators and politicians make important curriculum decisions with very little input from the teacher who will be implementing it in the classroom. This course attempted to make educators aware that curriculum can have different purposes, and

be influenced by a number of factors. Hopefully, people will take all of these things into account to make more informed curriculum decisions in the future.

Professor McCutcheon first presented the five basic orientations of the curriculum from Elliot W. Eisner's The Educational Imagination: On the Design and Evaluation of School Programs. In summary, Eisner stated that curriculum falls under five categories: (1) development of cognitive processes, (2) academic rationalism, (3) personal relevance, (4) social adaptation and social reconstruction, and (5) curriculum as technology. The development of cognitive processes sees the mind as a muscle that can be strengthened through practice. This type of curriculum is often problem-centered and requires students to repeatedly go through a problem solving process until they have mastered it.

Likewise, the other four orientations have a particular view of the mind and education, with corresponding approaches to ensure that learning occurs and objectives are met. In schools, the orientations are rarely seen acting alone, but instead they work together with one view dominating and influencing curriculum decisions. It is important to realize that people have different conceptions of education, and that each has its advantages and disadvantages. This is similar to the different learning and teaching styles that exist in the world. As a whole, the process of education is very complicated, but curriculum developers should still try to incorporate as many of these approaches and models as possible to ensure that they meet the needs of all students.

Professor McCutcheon reinforced the idea that classrooms are very complex environments by presenting the idea of the explicit, implicit and null curriculum. Eisner's five orientations impact what is ultimately taught in a classroom especially through the purposeful use of the explicit and implicit curriculums. In other words, the orientations

shape the objectives that a school publicly advertises and advocates (explicit), as well as the lessons that students pick up from the day-to-day activities that facilitate certain stereotypes, expectations, and beliefs within a student (implicit). However, it is very difficult to determine what lessons are taught by the mere absence of certain courses (null curriculum). Teachers, curriculum developers, politicians, administrators and other people who take part in curriculum decisions must deal with these difficult and complex aspects of education.

In addition to these somewhat theoretical issues, Professor McCutcheon also presented some everyday influences that educators must deal with. Textbooks, students, teachers, parents, corporations, society and politics play a significant role in curriculum decisions. First of all, textbooks are the prime source of information in schools and the author/publisher often dictate what materials and views are included. Students are the target audience of the curriculum, and play a role in how effective it is. They can provide feedback and insight into how to improve what is taught in schools and how it is presented. Teachers decide what is actually presented in a classroom regardless of what is in the published curriculum. They have the experience of working with students and observing what is effective and ineffective in the classroom. Therefore, curriculum developers should also take account their opinions and beliefs. Finally, society, politicians, corporations, parents and other entities have opinions on what should be taught. People who are in the position to make curriculum decisions should be aware that all of these things are trying to influence them. Rather than mindlessly succumbing to this pressure, they should take all of this input with a grain of salt and make their decision based on what is best for the student and the educational process.

This course provided a lot of insight into the complexity of education and the importance of incorporating feedback from various sources. Like many other courses in Educational Policy and Leadership, this course stressed the importance of continual evaluation and improvement, avoiding complacency, and utilizing feedback in education.

**ED P&L 925A/B/C50: Engaged Life-Long Learning Via Web Technologies (AU 1997, WI 1998 and SP 1998)**

*Objective: The world wide web provides a unique opportunity to engage individuals in problem-based learning, dialogue, and collaboration regardless of geographic location or time-of-day for the purpose of extending their own learning, knowledge, and understandings. This seminar brings together a community of learners to (1) define, locate, and/or create new web tools and strategies to extend and implement collaborative interaction among communities of learners and (2) use those tools and strategies to create and implement prototype, web-based learning environments and materials.*

This series of three seminars provided the opportunity to experience the entire process of developing and implementing a web-based course. The focus of the course changed with each quarter from brainstorming and initial planning in the Fall, to creating a vision/ template and actual development in the Winter, followed by implementation, evaluation and reflection in the Spring. While going through the process, the class encountered a number of key issues that should always be considered when placing a course on the World Wide Web.

The seminar consisted of students from a number of fields including aviation, foreign languages, technology, military ethics, and administration to name a few. This provided a variety of experiences and diverse backgrounds to draw from. The main emphasis for this first quarter was to brainstorm on how to place ED P&L 671 online. To begin with, Dr. Hall presented Philip Schlechty's research of "working on the work" to facilitate engagement in education. Schlechty provided eight qualities he felt are necessary to make a course

effective: (1) novelty and variety, (2) affiliation with others, (3) affirmation of performance, (4) the work, (5) clear and compelling standards, (6) authenticity, (7) choice and (8) protection from adverse consequences for initial failures. These characteristics became the hallmark and foundation for the course. The challenge was to incorporate all of these values with the existing ED P&L 671 curriculum by the start of the Spring quarter.

Once Schlechty's principles were established and discussed in relation to web-based courses, the class focused on other issues related to web-based courses. Education is a very complex process with many aspects that must be considered. A few examples are access of students to computers, audience/ student analysis, security, evaluation, technical issues (i.e. server space and speed, maintenance), and the purpose of the course. Students provided their views on all of the subjects and it was decided that the seminar would not be responsible for most administrative issues. Instead, the class focused more on developing the content for the TIENET (technology in education network) course as well as its organization. Also, the class explored the World Wide Web to create a database of existing educational tools. Many of these would be incorporated into the course during the next two quarters or saved for possible use in the future. At the end of the first quarter, the seminar had explored the many aspects of creating an online course and reached consensus on a few issues.

The second quarter started with primarily the same students. The emphasis changed from discussions and brainstorming to providing a finished product. Before the development could begin, the class had to agree on a template for the TIENET course. It was agreed that the class would be broken down into a number of modules. This ensured that all of the topics are covered but allows enough flexibility for students to choose the

order they would cover the material. The course project and Schlechty's idea of student engagement would tie together all of the information. Once this template was established, the class delegated the different parts of the ED P&L 671 course to the students.

The actual development of the modules required an effective management process to ensure that the course would be completed by the end of the quarter. Authors were able to maintain their autonomy, even though their submittals were evaluated and modified to ensure that writing styles remained consistent, and the work reflected Schlechty's eight principles. At the same time, a few members of the class established the tools that would be incorporated into the course to foster communication and hopefully a community of learners. As the quarter ended, certain tools like the chat room and the message board were sacrificed to both meet the deadline and avoid overwhelming the students/ course administrators.

Once the course was completed, various tests and evaluations were conducted. People in other seminars went through the modules and provided feedback on the material and its organization. As expected, it was impossible to meet everyone's demands with a single model for a web-based course. However, the seminar felt it successfully placed the former ED P&L 671 course on the Internet within the framework of Philip Schlechty's design qualities. Similarly, the course project required the participants to also model these principles. As stated before, the idea of student engagement was the foundation of the course and the "work" it provided.

The focus of the spring quarter was to implement the TIENET course, evaluate how well it was working, and reflect on the experiences of the past two quarters for future course development. Members of the TIENET team subscribed to the course listserv so they could

keep track of how the students were doing. Also, in-class discussions revolved around the topic of community building and its importance in education. At the beginning of the quarter, little interaction was occurring online. The TIENET team contemplated whether it should help generate discussion among the students or allow the "community" to develop on its own. Eventually, members of the class started to communicate with one another and the TIENET team mainly monitored the discussion while occasionally taking part in the discourse. Unforeseen technical problems were dealt with and for the most part, the course seemed to be successful.

Web-based courses will become more prevalent in the future so the seminar decided to reflect on the process that occurred in the past two quarters. Perhaps this information can lead to improvements in course development and provide guidance for the future. In particular, the documentation should describe the various problems and issues that the TIENET team faced and how these hurdles were overcome. This could help people avoid the same problems/ issues and concentrate on improving upon the current TIENET model!

As you can see, this course provided a lot of insight into the process of placing a course online. It also offered valuable information on other aspects of course management. First of all, continual evaluations are invaluable to improving a course. Often both students and teachers are willing to offer this type of feedback. Another important lesson is the importance of professional development and avoiding complacency. Over time, changes and modifications are needed to update information, take advantage of new tools and teaching techniques, and meet the needs of the students. Finally, the TIENET experience offered a glimpse of the dynamic and unpredictable nature of education. A lot of time and



effort is required to adequately deal with all the issues that surround the creation and implementation of a new course, especially if it is web-based.

### **ED P&L 650G01: Philosophy of Education (WI 1998)**

*Objective: Designed to provide students with an application of philosophy of education to issues and problems of teaching and living in a culturally diverse society. Specifically, students will (1) understand the arguments of selected educational reformers, (2) analyze selected educational issues in a conventional philosophical manner, and (3) demonstrate their understanding and analytical skills in class discussions and writing assignments.*

A teacher's philosophy of education affects his/her actions, thoughts and beliefs. Often, teachers do not take the time to think about what they believe in and how it influences what they do in the classroom. Therefore the class participants were expected to reflect and learn about themselves and their profession from the readings, class discussions and writing assignments.

This course discussed some common views of educational reformers and their beliefs on the purpose of education, and how this purpose can be achieved. The first text discussed how multiculturalism has changed the character of American education. Rather than teaching the importance of unity and a national identity, minorities spend more time appreciating the difference between cultures and maintaining separate identities. This is an issue that many teachers are facing in today's schools. The second textbook described the degradation of classical education in the United States. Schools concentrate more on specialization and skill building rather than the personal development of its students. Courses in philosophy and the humanities are being replaced with those tailored to specialized fields like engineering, science, law and medicine. Finally, the third textbook discussed whether or not education should be considered a profession. Primarily it

compared teaching to other professions like medicine, law and engineering. Discussions revolved around what traits determine if a field is a profession. It was determined that some common characteristics are helping others, policing one another's actions, and working towards efficiency and continual improvement in the field.

All three books presented various issues and problems in education that teachers should think about so they can deal with them both rationally and effectively. These topics are only a small sample of the issues that teachers and schools face today. Therefore, the professor provided the opportunity for individuals to practice dealing with them before actually facing similar problems in their classrooms. Similar to Professor Reagan's class on applied ethics, this course tries to make the philosophical issues relevant to the students so they become engaged in the assignments.

At first, the professor asked all of the students to summarize their philosophies of education. This short reflection would hopefully allow everyone to reflect on why they act as they do in classrooms. Professor Smith asked everyone to answer four simple questions:

- (1) Is education more for the sake of the individual learner or the "society" that sponsors that education?
- (2) To what extent does politics enter into any educational experience? Can we or should we constrain the extent to which this happens?
- (3) How does or should earlier educational experiences differ from later education?  
Would you say that K-12 education differs in degree from what happens in post-secondary education?

(4) How do you see the relationship between the education that takes place in schools (formal education) and the education that takes place in non-traditional settings?

(5) What is the point of education? Is it the same for everyone?

The students exchanged the papers with other members of the class. The next assignment asked them to critique the paper they received while reflecting on their own answers especially in relation to the course readings. By the eighth week, everyone received the first paper with someone else's critique. Professor Smith hoped that the students would learn how to critically examine and reflect on their personal philosophy. Future experiences, observations, and interactions could help the teachers to continually update their philosophies and hence their approach to education. This type of action can lead to professional and personal development.

This course also placed a lot of emphasis on teacher collaboration to share and exchange ideas. The book about the nature of professions explained that teachers do not possess manuals with processes that guarantee student involvement and success. Doctors, engineers, lawyers and other professions always rely on the past experiences of others to deal with new situations. Similarly, teachers should look to one another to continually update their techniques and approaches until they find the ones that are effective in their classroom. The more they interact with their peers, the more options that are available to them. This can lead to professional development throughout the field.

In summary, this course provides some valuable lessons for course development and management. First of all, it is a model of how to effectively engage students in the learning process. The issues are made relevant to the participants and this leads to heightened

interest and active involvement in the assignments and class discussions. The other important aspect of this course is its emphasis on both individual and overall professional development in education.

**ED P&L 925M50: Contemporary Research and Issues in Teacher Thinking, Curriculum and Educational Technology (WI 1998)**

*Objective: Investigate current research literature about teacher thinking, curriculum and technology and explore how they interrelate. The course will help reflect about the most vital concerns to educators as related to teacher thinking, curriculum and technology.*

Like other courses, this one emphasizes the complexity of education. Three factors—teacher thinking, curriculum, and technology—were investigated as well as their role in what occurs in the classroom. The two professors assigned a project to each student to explore these issues in his/ her particular field of interest. Qualitative research was to be used and the course provided guidance on how to conduct this type of investigation. In particular, the class discussed features of research like sampling, interviews, journal keeping, and data analysis. The professors repeatedly emphasized the importance of keeping the research question/ problem in mind to avoid getting sidetracked.

My project focused on how teacher thinking and curriculum interacted in the Air Force Reserved Officer Training Corps (ROTC) at Ohio State. The ROTC detachment is provided an official curriculum that determines what is taught and how the information is presented. I interviewed three instructors who had different educational and career backgrounds and varying years of experience. Questions centered on the professors' views of the curriculum as well as its appropriateness and usefulness in the classroom, personal thoughts on effective teaching techniques, and other related topics. I discovered that the teachers' thoughts and beliefs about education usually allowed them to deal with the

published curriculum. Either they tailored their teaching approach to the specified objectives and methods, or they ignored the prescribed course of action and developed their own version of the curriculum. Similarly, the professors appreciated when certain lessons provided leeway for using their own interpretations and past experiences. When this flexibility was not provided, they nevertheless modified the lessons to meet both their needs and those of the students.

I learned many lessons from this investigation like the importance of providing a very flexible curriculum. One reason is that teachers will ultimately decide what is taught and how it is presented in the classroom. Therefore, the materials should act as a guide for teachers rather than a series of step-by-step instructions. Second, the actual content that is taught might become outdated or no longer useful and teachers should have the opportunity to revise these parts of the curriculum. If not, the material might no longer be relevant or interesting and student engagement and involvement will be lost. Finally, to ensure that courses remain effective, course administrators should always seek feedback from teachers and instructors on how to improve the various aspects of the curriculum.

The experience of observing and studying the ROTC program shed some light on how this type of investigation can help improve the different aspects of a curriculum. If a person feels that a certain course is not as effective as it should be, a qualitative study could discover what is wrong with the instructor's approach, materials, assignments or other part of the process. Once exposed, the school can work to alleviate the problem or even enhance the strengths of a course. In other words, people should never feel complacent about their curriculum and qualitative assessments present one way to evaluate a course and ensure that nothing is being taken for granted.

The teacher-thinking course once again opened my eyes to how complex the educational process can be. I never really considered how much of an impact that a teacher's thoughts, beliefs and background have to the activities in a classroom and the implementation of a curriculum. Furthermore, this class provides a tool by which a person can learn more about both his/her course and those run by other educators. This new knowledge can offer improvements for substandard courses and provide information about the characteristics common to successful courses.

### **COMMUNICATIONS 893: Independent Study (SP 1998)**

*Objective: Participate in and observe the online Communication 140: Living in the Information Age to determine what aspects of web-based courses contribute to engaged learning and which do not. In particular, the feedback from students and observations will be related to Philip Schlechty's research on student engagement.*

This investigation is a follow up to the teacher-thinking course. Instead of relying on the observations of one's own class, in this case TIENET, some time should be spent on examining other related courses to discover other perspectives and/or approaches to education. On many occasions, people will develop tunnel vision where they believe that their view is the only one around and superior to others.

In the spring quarter, Communication 140 was put online. With permission from the course director, I conducted a study to determine what aspects of this course make it engaging for students. Hopefully, the results of my research will provide a glimpse into how the TIENET course could be improved. The Comm 140 course took advantage of tools not available in TIENET. Online newspapers, threaded discussions, and chat rooms were used to foster communication. Furthermore, the professor created artificial communities with assigned members, rather than allowing them to develop naturally. As you can see, there are

obvious differences between the two online courses. Perhaps they could learn from one another.

Survey questions were handed out to the students about halfway through the quarter that asked them to reflect on what they think makes the course effective. Specifically, the students were asked to compare this online course to traditional courses they have taken. What teaching tools, approaches and activities did they find engaging in the different types of courses and why did they feel this way? Furthermore, they were asked to make suggestions on how to improve the course. This information would be the foundation for my independent study.

First of all, I wanted to relate the responses to Schlechty's conditions necessary for engagement. Hopefully, the eight qualities that Schlechty determined to be important for traditional classes would also be vital to engagement online. Who knows, maybe some new qualities unique to the Internet would be discovered? Secondly, a database could be started that listed the various tools available to online courses and their associated strengths and weaknesses. I mentioned in the TIENET discussion that certain tools like chat were left out. This information could allow the next generation or version of ED P&L 671 to avoid the "growing pains" that Comm 140 experienced using chat rooms. Instead, they could incorporate the tool anticipating some of these inherent problems.

This affirms that qualitative research has a lot of potential to improving courses in the future. They can be used to both reflect on the problems and shortcomings of a course to correct them, and investigate similar courses to incorporate the positive aspects and avoid problems that it faced. Either way, this type of study allows the educational process to improve over time and, in the end, be more effective for students.

**ED T&L 925.50: Interdisciplinary Research Seminar on Cognitive Development, Learning and Cognitive Science (WI 1998)**

*Objective: Review and discuss major research programs examining learning, cognition, and cognitive and language development. There are a number of questions that cut across disciplinary boundaries in such fields as developmental psychology, human development, linguistics and education such as "What are the underlying cognitive mechanisms of human thinking, reasoning, comprehension and problem solving?" This seminar attempts to address how cognitive models can affect how learning, and hence teaching, possibly occurs.*

Education is a very complex process that is influenced by many outside sources. It does not make things any easier when students can also have numerous learning styles and processes. This course presents current research in the area of cognitive psychology. In essence, this field tries to model how the mind works in processes like learning and development. Hopefully, knowing how the mind operates in these situations can help educators create more effective teaching techniques and tools.

The existence of many learning processes suggests the existence of a number of teaching processes. This makes sense since courses on college teaching and curriculum advocates numerous techniques and approaches to educating people. However, it also gives insight into how complex and difficult it can be to develop an effective curriculum. Every classroom is made up of different students with various learning styles. This means that an approach that worked one year might not work in subsequent classes. Following this line of thinking, teachers would have to modify their courses every year if they want students to be engaged and learning to occur. Educators can never afford to become complacent with what they do in a classroom. Professional development is necessary to overcome this burden year after year.



The cognitive psychology course presented the theories of many renowned psychologists. Instead of accepting their ideas at face value, Professor Sloutsky asked the students to critically examine the various theories. Just because research suggests a certain model to explain human thought and development does not mean it is valid. Often, invalid assumptions, vested interests, changing variables and other factors affect the reliability of certain information. In education, this course teaches people to challenge currently accepted ideas and theories. For example, educators should want to prove for themselves that certain teaching tools are effective for their students rather than rely on other people's opinions. This paper has already shown that too many variables influence education to assume that a process that is successful in one classroom will necessarily be effective anywhere else or even in the same classroom on the next day!

In summary, this cognitive psychology course suggests that the curriculum development process is very complex because so many variables must be taken into account. One possible way to deal with this difficulty is to learn about the different theories of how learning occurs. This information can be used to determine the best teaching approach to meet the particular needs of students. However, the course also warns that just because psychology advocates a certain approach to education does not necessarily mean that it will work. Educators should remain skeptical until the theory or idea proves itself to be reliable and true.

**PUBPOL&MGT 880V/X06: Co-Creating Learning Organizations (WI 1998 and SP 1998)**

*Objective: Co-creation of learning organizations through collaborative learning teams and networks in public and not-for-profit organizations. Six learning disciplines are explored and enacted and the workshop participants engage in learning experiences to build personal*

*mastery of strategic leadership, teaming, and learning organizations. As an organization learning laboratory, the workshop emphasizes practical application of ideas, principles, practices, and methods in public and not-for-profit agencies. Since this course carries on from the Winter to the Spring quarter, it provides an experience with new lessons and new participants, similar to an evolving organization.*

This is a very unconventional classroom experience that focused on learning at both the individual and group level. The course concentrates on six learning disciplines: (1) personal mastery and leadership, (2) mental models including the Enneagram and Myers-Briggs Type Indicator, (3) shared vision and values driven commitment, (4) team and network learning, (5) systems thinking and modeling/mapping of dynamic systems, and (6) facilitation skills and processes.

In essence, this is a student owned and operated learning process that resolves many of the issues of student engagement. I will go through Schlechty's eight design qualities and how this course models the principles.

The first quality is authenticity. Students determined the shared vision, direction and purpose of the course. For the most part, the participants are very interested in the topics that are covered. Throughout the two quarters, the class evaluated where they were and adjusted the lessons accordingly. Similarly, each member decided what his/her learning objectives would be for the quarter. How well they achieved these outcomes determined how well they did in the class.

The second quality is novelty and variety. As mentioned before, the students decided what would be covered in the six learning disciplines. Often, they asked for suggestions from other students about the direction that the different facilitation groups would go. One common suggestion was the use of new or novel activities. Some examples from last quarter were using play dough to teach team learning, and planting a tree to model

our shared vision. Unique activities and rotating between the six disciplines ensured both novelty and variety in the class.

Protection from adverse consequences for initial failures is the third quality. There are no graded turn-in assignments. Instead the focus of the class was on facilitating class discussions in the learning disciplines and meeting with Dr. Backoff twice during the quarter to discuss what had been learned. The only real assignments were preparing the lessons, creating learning objectives, and keeping a journal with reflections about the class. Since the stress of traditional deadlines for papers, projects and tests were not present, no one was really scared about any type of adverse consequences. On the contrary, everyone was motivated to present the lessons to the rest of the class and I do not remember any group not being prepared.

The fourth characteristic is choice. As mentioned earlier, students do not only decide what the class will focus on in each learning discipline, but they also decide how the material is presented. Every student owned a portion of the class and was able to provide suggestions and comments to other students. In other words, everyone had a large say in what occurred each week.

Affiliation with others is the fifth trait of engaged learning. The class was broken down into many subgroups that worked with one another. At one level, the six learning disciplines were delegated to different groups that decided when and how the material would be presented. Often these groups would meet out of class to prepare the lessons. During class, many activities required people to pair off into groups. From measuring blood pressure to playing with play dough, this was another type of interaction that occurred.

Finally, many students even got together socially outside the classroom to foster the community that first began in the public policy course.

The next quality is affirmation of performance which is defined as being able to make judgments on one's own progress and results, while at the same time getting ongoing encouragement and acknowledgment from others. Once again, a majority of class exercises involved group activities where the members supported one another and provided continual feedback. Furthermore, Dr. Bob measured everyone's performance based on participation in class activities, keeping a journal, the one-on-one counseling, and how well a person met his/her objectives. For the most part, the grade was dependent on how the individual felt he/she had done in the class. Dr. Bob trusted that all of the students would be honest with themselves since they ran all aspects of the course.

The eighth trait is the actual work done in the class. Students determined the activities that would help develop the six learning disciplines. Everyone had a vested interest to make sure that the work was interesting and engaging since they could only blame themselves if the work was irrelevant or boring. Furthermore, Dr. Bob did not set any standard on how long journals must be or how many learning objectives everyone must have. He provided everyone leeway to everyone hoping that the students would do the activities because they were interested in them and motivated to learn.

The final quality is the presence of clear and compelling standards. Dr. Bob made it clear that the students would determine what their learning objectives would be while also being responsible for organizing the class in a manner that met everyone's needs. Since the students defined the standards, they made sure that they were very clear and compelling so they knew where they stood at all times.

As you can see, all of Schlechty's principles of engaged learning were modeled by this course. This course was the product that all instructors should strive for. The students in the class were very motivated and involved in the activities. The idea of cocreation required student ownership of the entire process and believing that it would work. Similarly, many of Schlechty's design qualities emphasized the importance of establishing a learning community. This community supported one another and allowed everyone to grow at his/ her own pace.

In addition to modeling student engagement, this course also taught me the importance of reflections. Keeping a journal of one's reflections allows the student to think about what occurs in class and determine what he/she has learned. This learning can be related to the six learning disciplines or even life in general. Journal keeping creates a very healthy habit of taking a time out during the day to discover the lessons that experiences teach us. This is closely related to the process of personal and professional development.

#### **ED P&L 812: American Schools and American Society (SP 1998)**

*Objective: Focus on understanding different social, political, cultural and economic facets of American society and how they influence and are influenced by schools, the people who make up the school's community, etc. Also, the course will try to do the following: (1) explore crucial social issues and how these might influence the way in which students, teachers, and communities make meaning of their interactions, and how such interactions influence the quality of life and the learning and teaching process, (2) discuss how the above intersects with the dynamics of race, class, gender, and how schools can contribute more productively to these dynamics, and (3) explore the human faces behind the social and cultural forces influencing the schooling experience.*

The TIENET course discussed the importance of audience analysis when developing a curriculum. It can determine what topics are discussed and how they are presented. This

course digs a little deeper into understanding the different parts of American society. Specifically, it deals with race, class, gender and culture.

The first part of the course tries to explain why conflicts occur. Often, people get caught up in an argument that quickly escalates. Professor Errante suggests that misunderstandings and different points of view usually cause these problems. In many places, people have made assumptions about various groups of people. In day-to-day activities, communities reinforce these stereotypes to the point that they become factual and real. The readings provide examples where people who are well intentioned say things that negatively reflect on others. Often these statements are influenced by one's upbringing and conditioning. Teachers must especially be careful about these types of actions because they can insinuate things that influence what students think about themselves and their place in society.

Later readings focus on how stereotypes can become self-fulfilling prophecies. For example, if a student is told enough times that he/she is stupid and can not do math, eventually he/she will think this is true and as a result will do poorly in the subject. Similarly, teachers can have a big impact on how students feel about their culture, gender or background. Therefore, educators must become aware of the unintended messages that they might be sending to students. Often, people have preconceptions and stereotypes of people that are displayed in their gestures, actions and words. People should always reflect on what they say, think and do. Awareness of the problem and a willingness to change are the only things that can change this type of behavior.

## **Lessons Learned**

This part of the paper will try to synthesize everything that has been learned in the graduate program and determine the important lessons that will aid me in curriculum development and management. As stated in the introduction, the major themes will be printed in boldface followed by a description of how the ideas can be incorporated at the Air Force Academy and other institutions of learning. It should be noted that all of the lessons are interrelated and support one another. The key is to capitalize on the positive aspects of the themes to improve the quality and effectiveness of the curriculum and its implementation.

### **I. Engagement**

This is a very broad topic that incorporates many of the subsequent themes of education. Engagement is the process that motivates students to become actively involved in an activity. Numerous courses at Ohio State stress the various aspects of facilitating this type of student engagement. Terms like relevance, applicability, ownership, collaboration, and community building are used when discussing how to make courses more engaging. All of these ideals are suggestions for fostering student participation in the learning process and hopefully an internalization of the objectives taught in a course.

From my three quarters in the graduate program, I realize that many guidelines are available to help in this endeavor. Many suggestions and theories are based on classroom observations, research and teaching experience. Professor Hoy suggests various teaching techniques in her college teaching course that help

stimulate student involvement. A good example is Professor Reagan, who uses case studies to foster student involvement in his applied ethics course. Similarly, the TIENET course and public policy and management displayed how important creating a community of learners can be to providing an effective and engaging learning environment.

A different approach is Philip Schlechty's idea of "working on the work" that is presented by Dr. Hall in both the teacher-thinking course and the TIENET seminar. Instead of focusing on the actions of the teacher like teaching techniques and presentation styles, or modifying the content of a course, Schlechty suggests that instructors should spend more time and effort to make the actual assignments, projects and papers more engaging. He even provides a list of eight design qualities that help in this endeavor.

The field of education has many examples of approaches and theories to help enhance the effectiveness of various courses and many more will be probably be developed in the future. The key is to keep the goal of engagement in mind, be informed on the different options, and do what is necessary to achieve it in the classroom.

## **II. Feedback**

This issue is closely related to the idea of student engagement. On many occasions, topics become outdated and irrelevant to students, and teaching techniques will lose their effectiveness. Both of these things can lead to frustration



and disinterest on the part of the teacher and the students, or even worse, complacency if they feel like nothing can be done about it.

That is why evaluations are so necessary. Students, teachers, and parents can all offer suggestions based on their observations, opinions and past experiences to help improve the situation. Furthermore, research can be done on various aspects of education like student-instructor interaction to discover ways to make the process more engaging. The important thing is not to become comfortable with the current state of affairs. Since the field of education is always changing and evolving, a lot of time and effort must be spent on getting continual feedback to find ways to ensure the process remains viable and effective.

### **III. Complex Nature of Education**

The field of education is very challenging because it is influenced by so many entities. Curriculum developers must keep many things in mind when creating or modifying a course. Factors like learning styles, teaching approaches, cultures, stereotypes, politics, societal concerns, personalities, and economics must all be taken into account when making curriculum decisions.

Cognitive psychology shows that students possess numerous learning styles and strategies. Similarly, teacher education courses provide a number of tools and approaches to use in the classroom. Experience and luck will play a large role in how effective any course will be. For example, the activities must engage students with different backgrounds and abilities. Observing the classroom, interacting with

the students, and receiving honest feedback are some ways to improve both student's ability to learn and the teaching process that is used.

People are often unaware of stereotypes and assumptions that people have. For example, Professor Errante discussed a topic that seems trivial at first. In many stores, a person has the option to purchase pantyhose that is considered to be "nude." This color is very light in complexion, which obviously does not take into account people of darker skin tones. Professor Errante points out that the manufacturer probably did not intend to send any type of message, but just assumed that what they consider "nude" skin tone is universal to everyone. Similarly, a curriculum could advocate one person's or group's ideas or values that are not acceptable to everyone or even portray people in a negative manner based on unintended biases or stereotypes. Once again, feedback and reflection can help avoid these occurrences.

Another aspect of education are the opinions of society at large, or in particular the suggestions of parents, students, politicians, and others. Often, these groups all have input on what should be taught in schools and what the purpose of education should be. Many of these groups have a lot of power and influence so their views can not be taken for granted. Politicians can decide how much money goes to schools. Parents decide where they will send their kids. Students determine how much learning occurs and how effective a curriculum is. Finally, teachers decide what is ultimately taught in schools and can provide information on what does/ does not work in the classroom.

As you can see, there are many factors that have an impact on education. I have not even mentioned textbooks, teacher/ student personalities, and economics

(budget constraints) that obviously play large roles in curriculum development and school activities. This graduate school experience opened my eyes to factors that I have always taken for granted and has made me more perceptive to interactions that might not be obvious but still occur. Later on, I will mention the unique considerations of the Air Force Academy that I must also keep in mind.

Unfortunately, this discussion probably does not cover all the issues that I must take into account. It is impossible to consider everything so one can only hope to make the best decisions with the information that is available.

#### **IV. Professional Development**

Professional development is closely related to student engagement, feedback and the complex nature of education. First of all, educators should never become complacent with either their abilities or their courses. A class that is currently very effective and engaging does not mean that it will always be this way. Therefore, teachers should be willing to learn all that they can about facilitating student engagement, collecting and using feedback, and realizing the various forces that shape education. All of these activities help a person in his/her development as an educator.

As mentioned before, many tools and approaches are available for stimulating student interest and involvement. In the future, many more approaches will probably be developed and current techniques will most likely be modified. When a teacher suspects that students are losing interest, he/she must be knowledgeable in his/her options and be ready to implement them. A good way to

attain this knowledge is to collaborate with fellow teachers, take part in conferences, and stay up-to-date on educational research. These activities will allow the instructor to know the various teaching techniques that have proven to be effective in the past.

Receiving feedback, ideas, tips and suggestions from other teachers is obviously important to professional development. A teacher should also listen to students, parents and others if the information can help improve the class and his/her abilities. In addition to feedback from all of these outside sources, educators should take time to read about new developments in this field and reflect about their own beliefs. Individuals should be willing to honestly examine themselves to determine if they see any areas that need improvement. If a teacher does not feel that any changes are necessary, feedback provided by others will do no good.

Finally, it is impossible for instructors to always take into account all of the factors that affect education. The best thing that can be done is to be aware that there are many variables and try to consider as many as possible when making a decision. Often, the only way to improve a course is by trial and error. It is too difficult to rationally consider all of the influences and determine an effective solution to the problem. Instead, teachers should try to deal with the factors that they are aware of. At the same time, teachers can experiment with various techniques and course modifications until something begins to work. Often students and fellow teachers are willing to help in this ill-defined and complex process.

### **Considerations for the Air Force Academy**

In this section, I will discuss the characteristics that are unique to the Air Force Academy and their effect on the curriculum development and management of the Honor and Ethics Education Program.

#### **I. Air Force Academy's Local Area Network (LAN)**

The first consideration to take into account is the Air Force Academy's LAN or USAFANET. This provides Internet capabilities and a server if I am interested in using a web-based curriculum. In addition to this, the LAN provides closed-circuit television programming that can show movies and other videos on an hourly basis. Currently this is used to show movies like Crimson Tide that can be the basis for ethical discussions in the honor classes. Furthermore, surveys and various feedback forms are already performed over the network. This can be used to ask for suggestions and honest evaluations about the honor education program. The information can help to continually modify and improve the different aspects of the curriculum.

The USAFANET also has many capabilities like chatrooms and newsgroups. Since the entire network is fiberoptic (i.e. capable of high-speed information transfer), I am sure it will incorporate many more tools in the future. It is impossible to determine the capabilities of future communication software but at least the Air Force Academy has the potential to take advantage of them in their educational programs.

## **II. Access to Computers**

This unique consideration is closely tied to the existence of the USAFANET. For the past fifteen to twenty years, all incoming students at the Academy have been required to possess a computer. Fortunately, the institution provides everyone with a PC as well as an Internet connection in their dorm rooms. Therefore, the issue of access and equity is no longer a problem. All students have both the access to a computer and the World Wide Web as well as help on how to use these tools.

Audience analysis still must be done because the cadets are from all fifty states and diverse backgrounds. However, the expensive task of providing personal computers to everyone is already accomplished.

## **III. Honor Lessons are Leadership Exercises**

It has been shown that the Internet can be used as a very powerful educational tool. TIENET is an example of a course that can be put entirely online. However, this is not a viable option at the Air Force Academy. No one argues that ethical decision making and other skills related to honor and morality could be covered on the web. I must remember that the Academy is first and foremost a leadership laboratory for future leaders of the armed forces.

Honor education is an example of this leadership training. The curriculum is for the most part managed and taught by the students. This unique characteristic prevents the establishment of an entirely online course. Instead, the web can help facilitate and support the learning process. Face-to-face interactions must always occur to provide the honor representatives the opportunity to practice their

communication, management, and motivational skills that are deemed essential to leadership.

#### **IV. Limited Teacher Education**

As stated before, the honor education program is a very important leadership opportunity for the students. The actual instructors for the ethics lessons are undergraduate students with little to no background in teaching except past experiences. However, professors from the Academy are available to provide help and expertise. Furthermore, the honor education program has initiated a program where the honor representatives meet twice a month to exchange ideas and suggestions with one another. This follows the idea of professional development mentioned throughout this paper. Additionally, the students are asked to provide this feedback and suggestions to both the Honor Office for possible curriculum revisions and the students who will replace them the following year. I think that these actions help remedy the shortcoming in teaching backgrounds and foster continual improvement of the program.

#### **V. Publicly Funded Institution**

Since the Air Force Academy is federally funded, the curriculum is influenced heavily by politicians and the society. Currently, the most important topic is sexual harassment due to the recent scandals in the different branches of the Armed Forces. Often this influence can not be ignored and the suggestions from various parties must be taken into account in the various character development

curriculums. When I was a cadet, a lot of students suggested that the amount of lessons tailored to sexual harassment and other gender related issues should be limited. They felt that the time spent on these problems was overkill. However, due to pressures from outside the Academy and from the institution's leadership, little could be done.

### **Conclusion**

As you can see, my Master's program in General Professional Studies was a very worthwhile experience. Upon graduating from the Air Force Academy, I had very little knowledge about course development except some personal feelings about which teaching techniques worked and content specific to the Honor Education Program. In only three quarters and fourteen courses, I have gained an appreciation for the numerous factors that contribute to curriculum development and the complexity of education. As I mentioned before, the Master's degree does not signify an end to my professional development. Instead, it marks only the beginning. Hopefully, the lessons I have learned this past year will enable me to make the Honor Education Program at the Air Force Academy more effective in the future.

I would like to end this paper by thanking the many individuals who have contributed to this successful experience. First of all, I have to thank Colonel Hyatt, Colonel Barker, Major Obermeyer and Major Davis for providing me the opportunity to attend the Ohio State University. Next, I would like to thank all of the professors and fellow graduate students who have taught me so much about the many aspects of education and life. In particular, I would like to thank Keith Hall, my advisor, and Gail McCutcheon for their



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